

# NJ HIGHER EDUCATION PRESIDENTS OF COLOR COVID-19 VACCINATION STANDING TOGETHER TO SAVE LIVES



Dr. Augustine A. Boakye



J.W. Crawford III, J.D.



Dr. Marcheta P. Evans



Dr. Barbara Gaba



Dr. Jonathan Holloway



Dr. Lamont O. Repollet

As New Jersey's college and university presidents of color, we share a duty to be advocates for knowledge, truth, equity and humanity. We have come together collectively to encourage our fellow members of Black and brown communities to receive a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available. *We believe and trust the science. We ask that you do too.*

The apprehension and misgivings that we are hearing, seeing and reading about COVID-19 vaccines are sources of mutual concern for all of us. We explicitly understand the basis for these fearful perceptions and the hesitation that has been brought on by current and historic experiences. The fears and mistrust from unwelcome and unjust life experiences are especially profound for those in our Black and brown communities. For these reasons, we write this important and timely message in the hope that it will provide you with some clarity in hearing about the safety of the vaccines from community members with similar experiences and trustworthy motivations.

The data shows that the two approved vaccines are greater than 94 percent effective with minimal known side effects. We urge our communities of color, who already struggle with many underlying health conditions that put us at a much higher risk for COVID-19, to listen, understand and act on the science showing that these vaccines are safe. We strongly encourage you to get one of the available vaccines to prevent the life-threatening illness and related complications that have already taken the lives of a disproportionately high number of people of color across this country. If a large number of people in our Black and brown communities fail to get a COVID-19 vaccine, we fear the consequences for our communities of color may be dire. It's literally about saving your life and the lives of your friends, family and community members.

*Please do not permit fear, along with past and present distrust, to keep you and your families from receiving a vaccine that may save your lives.*

We are all working hard to navigate the effects of the pandemic within our individual institutions and communities. As a team of higher education presidents, and as educators, we will continue this dialogue and conduct activities on our campuses to help lessen the fear surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine. We are each committed to receiving this vaccine personally as soon as it becomes available to us and encourage all of you to register to do the same. Standing together in getting vaccinated against COVID-19, we can help end this pandemic and minimize loss of life. When it is your turn, we hope you will feel empowered with trust in the science to protect yourself and those around you.

Register now at [covid19.nj.gov/vaccine](https://covid19.nj.gov/vaccine)

